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News Release



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DRAFT ANALYSIS OF RIVERSIDE FAIRY SHRIMP CONSERVATION COSTS RELEASED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Costs Associated with Critical Habitat Part of Larger Economic Assessment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released today a draft analysis that estimates costs associated with conservation activities for the endangered Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus woottoni*) from the time it was listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1993 through the year 2024 range from \$470 to \$770 million.

According to the analysis, the largest portion of costs associated with conservation activities for the species has been, and will continue to be, assumed by private entities undertaking real estate development projects.

Conservation activity costs include preserving, restoring or managing habitat; conducting biological surveys and monitoring; and costs to the Service and other Federal agencies to ensure projects do not jeopardize the continued existence of the species or modify designated critical habitat.

In assessing the estimated costs, economists reviewed conservation activities for 18,330 acres of essential vernal pool habitat for the Riverside fairy shrimp, including the 5,795 acres the Service is proposing to designate as critical habitat.

“Through this detailed analysis the public can more clearly see the costs associated with the listing of the species and the designation of critical habitat, and how these costs fit into the economic profile of the region,” said Steve Thompson, Manager of the Service’s California-Nevada Operations Office.

The Service is accepting comments and information on the draft economic analysis and proposed critical habitat designation until 5:00 pm on November 18, 2004.

Critical habitat identifies specific geographic areas essential to the conservation of a federally listed species and which may require special management considerations or protection.

The designation of critical habitat does not establish a refuge, wilderness or other preserve area and only those projects being carried out, funded, or authorized by a Federal agency require consultation with the Service to ensure a project will not adversely modify designated critical habitat.

During the rulemaking process, the ESA requires an analysis of economic impacts associated with the designation of any particular area as critical habitat. Economic and other relevant impacts may then be considered to determine whether the benefits of excluding a particular area as critical habitat outweigh the benefits of including it in such designation, unless the exclusion would result in a species' extinction.

The Riverside fairy shrimp is a small, freshwater crustacean that inhabits vernal pools in portions of southern California. As a result of development, farming, grazing, off-road vehicle use and other factors, the majority of vernal pools that once supported populations of this species have been lost or degraded.

Proposed critical habitat includes a mixture of Federal, State, local and private lands, identified in six geographically separate units: Transverse Range Unit, Los Angeles Basin-Orange Unit, Western Riverside Unit, North San Diego Unit, Central San Diego Unit, and South San Diego Unit. Each of the six proposed critical habitat units corresponds to management areas identified in the 1998 Recovery Plan for Vernal Pools of Southern California.

Some of the areas proposed as critical habitat contain core populations of Riverside fairy shrimp in vernal pool complexes that are found within 5 miles of each other. There are also 7 isolated occurrences of the species proposed as critical habitat based on several factors, including their relationship to the geographical range of the species; their importance to future recolonization of potential habitat; and maintenance of genetic diversity.

In 30 years of implementing the Endangered Species Act, the Service has found that the designation of critical habitat provides little additional protection to most listed species, while preventing the Service from using scarce conservation resources for activities with greater conservation benefits.

In almost all cases, recovery of listed species will come through voluntary cooperative partnerships, not regulatory measures such as critical habitat. Habitat is also protected through cooperative measures under the Endangered Species Act including Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's Private Stewardship Grants and Partners for Fish and Wildlife program also restore habitat. Habitat for endangered species is provided on many national wildlife refuges, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife management areas.

Comments and materials on the proposed critical habitat designation and draft economic analysis should be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92009. Comments may also be submitted by e-mail to fwlrvfs@r1.fws.gov.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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